

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-4, 6-10, 12-16, 18-21 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,960,337 (Brewster, et al.) in view of U.S. Patents 6,028,514 (Lemelson, et al.) and 6,052,122 (Sutcliffe, et al.). Also, the Examiner objected to Claim 22 as being dependent on a rejected base claim, and the Examiner indicated that Claim 22 would be allowable if appropriately rewritten.

Claim 22, which was previously dependent directly from Claim 1, is being rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of previous Claim 1. Also, an informality in Claim 22 is being corrected. It is believed that this places Claim 22 in condition for allowance without further amendment or discussion, and the Examiner is asked to reconsider and to withdraw the objection to Claim 22 and to allow this claim.

In addition, independent Claims 1, 7 and 13 are herein being amended to better define the subject matters of these claims. In particular, these claims are being amended to better describe the databases used in the present invention. Claim 24, which is dependent from Claim 1, is being added to describe an optional feature of the invention, and Claim 9 is being cancelled to reduce the number of issues in this application.

All of Claims 1-4, 6-8, 10, 12-16, 18-21, 23 and 24 also patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. The Examiner is, thus, also requested to reconsider and to withdraw the above-identified rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. 103, and to allow these claims.

As explained in detail in the present application, this invention relates to a procedure to help people with disabilities. In accordance with the present invention, a network is formed that puts volunteers in contact with the people who have requested help. The network includes a first database to hold information about people with disabilities, and a second database to hold information about the volunteer helpers.

The first database provides, for each disabled person participating in the network, a description of the needs of the person, his or her type of handicap, a history of prior assistance given to the person, and a list of volunteers who have helped that person in the past. The second database identifies, for each of the volunteers, the name of the volunteer, his or her skills, services that the volunteer can offer, a history of help given by the volunteer, and a list of people that he or she has helped.

In the operation of this volunteer assistance network, when a person with a disability wants help, that person makes a request for assistance. A matching server then gets information from the first database about the person asking for help, and uses that information to identify a volunteer from the second database. Then, this matching server notifies that volunteer and provides him or her with the information needed to contact and help the person who asked for the help. The matching server also provides information to either or both the volunteer and the person who asked for help, to enable these people to meet physically.

The prior art of record does not disclose or suggest the above-described databases used for matching people with disabilities with volunteer helpers.

More specifically, Brewster, et al. describes a procedure in which, after an operator is informed of an emergency event, the operator selects from a group of Emergency Assistance Services (EAS), the EAS who can reach the location of the emergency in the quickest time, and the operator then notifies that selected EAS.

Lemelson, et al. discloses a procedure in which people may be warned of a variety of emergency or dangerous conditions. In this procedure, a person carries a warning device, which can also be used to monitor for several medical conditions of the wearer.

Sutcliffe, et al. discloses an Internet based matchmaking procedure. Based on input criteria, a computer matches two candidates.

The present invention is different from the systems and procedures disclosed in Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. in a number of important ways. One important difference is that this invention uses volunteers, who may not be busy and are willing to help, while Brewster, et al. does not. Another significant difference is that the present invention is not specifically designed for the purpose of responding to emergency situations, while Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. are. In addition, these references do not disclose or suggest the way in which the matching server is used in the present invention.

This matching server has access to the above-described information in the first and second database, and uses information from the first database to identify in the second database a volunteer who is willing to help. The matching server then notifies the identified volunteer of the request and provides him or her with the information needed to contact the person who asked for assistance.

The Examiner agrees that Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. do not disclose the matching server of this invention, but argues that Sutcliffe, et al. do.

However, those of ordinary skill in the art of the present invention would not look to Sutcliffe, et al. for guidance on how to modify the systems disclosed in Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. to design or operate a network to help disabled people. This is because Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. do not relate to the field of Sutcliffe, et al.

On the one hand, Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. both expressly relate to responding to emergency situations, such as serious medical conditions. On the other hand, Sutcliffe, et al. relates to matchmaking or dating services. Furthermore, the procedures of Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. are time critical, while Sutcliffe, et al. is not.

Consequently, there is no suggestion in the prior art to use a matching server of the type described in Sutcliffe, et al, in any modification of Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al. The only suggestion for using a matching server and the databases of the present invention is found in the present application; and, Applicants respectfully submit, the Examiner, in using the teachings of Sutcliffe, et al. to modify the systems of Brewster, et al. and Lemelson, et al, is applying the disclosure of the present application in hindsight.

Moreover, even the combination of Brewster, et al, Lemelson, et al, and Sutcliffe, et al. does not disclose or teach the databases of the present invention.

These databases are very useful because they help to ensure that effective assistance is provided. For example, the mere fact that a person has volunteered to help does not mean that person can effectively help anyone. The databases of the present invention better enable the matching server to match the abilities, skills and experiences of the volunteers with people who can use those abilities, skills or experiences

Independent Claims 1, 7 and 13 describe these databases of the present invention, which are not shown in or suggested by the prior art. Specifically, each of Claims 1, 7 and 13 describe the feature that the matching server provides information to at least one of (i) said one of the volunteers, or (ii) the person making the request, to enable said one of the volunteers and the person making the request to physically find and meet each other.

Because of the above-discussed differences between Claims 1, 7 and 13 and the prior art, and because of the advantages associated with those differences, these Claims patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. Claims 2-4, 6 and 19-21, 23 and 24 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 1. Likewise, Claims 8, 10 and 12 are dependent from Claim 7 and are allowable therewith; and Claims 14-16 and 18 are dependent from, and are allowable with, Claim 13.

In light of the above discussion, the Examiner is asked to reconsider and to withdraw the rejection of Claims 1-4, 6-8, 10, 12-16 and 18-21 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. 103, and the objection to Claim 22, and the Examiner is requested to allow Claims 1-4, 6-8, 10, 12-16 and 18-24. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference with Applicants' Attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is asked to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully Submitted,

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